

'The Trike Project' keeps boy's memory alive

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GAGES LAKE – When Scott Conlon was 4, he was diagnosed with a rare and complex pediatric disorder.

Seven years later, at the young age of 11 in 2009, Conlon lost his battle with rapid-onset obesity with hypothalamic dysfunction, hyperventilation and autonomic dysregulation.

As his disease progressed, the Laremont School student from Buffalo Grove lost the ability to communicate and needed to use a ventilator to breathe. But despite his failing health, he was still able to pursue his love of riding using an adapted tricycle, which was initially borrowed from the Special Education District of Lake County by Jennifer Burke, a SEDOL instructor, as she provided extra care for him after school and during the summer.



Janet Conlon (left) stands next to Jennifer Burke, co-founder of "The Trike Project." Five students from the district will receive a personalized adapted tricycle because of the project. The project was started in memory of Janet's son and former Laremont School student, Scott, who passed away in November 2009. (Cassandra Dowell - cdowell@shawmedia.com)

Teachers, family and friends of Conlon were able to remember him and pass on his joy of riding to five Laremont School students who received scholarships for adapted tricycles through "The Trike Project" during an assembly Jan. 20 at the school.

Burke, along with SEDOL physical education teacher Liz Pumala, began "The Trike Project" to raise money for students to obtain their very own adapted tricycle in memory of Conlon.

The tricycles can range in cost between \$1,200 to \$2,500, or more, Pumala said.

Families who received the scholarships will only pay about 20 percent of the bike's cost, she said.

"I finally met Scott Conlon," Burke said about the joy Conlon projected when riding an adapted tricycle for the first time. "That bike brought Scott alive again. He was just another boy riding around in the neighborhood."

Laremont School students Iris Morical, 6, James Diaz, 6, Beckham Zwier, 7, Paige Grindley, 14, and Jennifer Bradford, 16, received certificates for scholarships that will go toward their new, personalized adapted tricycles during the Jan. 20 assembly.

Parents received information about the scholarships and those interested were encouraged to apply, Burke said, adding that there was enough funding for everyone who applied to receive a scholarship.

The school also has eight of its own adapted tricycles, which are used regularly by students during physical education class and as a reward, Pumala said.

The tricycles – made by a company called Rifton – are customized according to each person's special needs in regard to weight, height, strength ability and more. The students' bikes are slated to arrive in the spring, Burke said.